



Visa Ramblings

Issue 7

Free: Please Take One.

Issue 7

2 Charged After ICE Rescues Illegal Aliens From Los Angeles-Area Drop House

Hostage claims he was starved, beaten and subdued with stun guns



"Tragically, this case shows yet again the ruthlessness and brutality of the human smuggling trade"

January 15, 2009

LANCASTER, Calif. - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents executed a search warrant overnight at a home here where a Salvadoran and Ecuadoran national were rescued by ICE Tuesday night after reportedly being held hostage by human smugglers in the residence, one for at least three weeks.

Following their rescue Tuesday night, one of the hostages told ICE investigators his captors had beaten him repeatedly and forced him to go nearly two weeks without food. Agents said that one of the other smuggled aliens at the residence shared portions of his daily meal with him, possibly helping him to survive. A hostage also told investigators his captors often assaulted him with stun guns. The men are now in protective custody.

The two were freed after ICE agents received a tip late last week that smugglers were holding a hostage and abusing him in an effort to collect a \$5,000 smuggling fee. Based upon that information, investigators deter-

mined the smugglers were operating somewhere in the Lancaster area. After working virtually around-the-clock over the weekend, ICE agents traced the activity to a home at 646 Martha Court.

When agents knocked on the door Tuesday evening, they heard one of the victims crying out for help inside. As investigators entered the residence, they saw windows boarded up from the inside, and one of the suspected smugglers straddled atop a man beating him. The victim was soaked in sweat and clad only in underwear.

"Tragically, this case shows yet again the ruthlessness and brutality of the human smuggling trade," said Robert Schoch, special agent in charge for the ICE Office of Investigations in Los Angeles.

"To the smugglers, these people are nothing more than a payday and they have no qualms about using threats and violence in an effort to collect their

smuggling fees. ICE is working aggressively to disrupt this kind of activity and dismantle the criminal organizations involved."

The two suspected smugglers, both of whom are in the country illegally, made their initial appearance in federal court yesterday. Roberto Jose-Tomas, 23, of Mexico, and Diego Francisco-Pascual, 32, of Guatemala, have been charged in a criminal complaint with harboring illegal aliens, an offense that carries a maximum statutory penalty of 10 years in federal prison. At yesterday's hearing, a United States Magistrate judge ordered the men held without bond pending an arraignment on February 2.

During last night's search of the Lancaster residence, ICE agents recovered additional evidence related to the investigation. Authorities say the investigation is ongoing.

Source: <http://www.ice.gov/pi/nr/0901/090115lanaster.htm>

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Legal Immigration Outpaces Illegal



By Cynthia Dizikes
LA Times

For the first time in a decade, the makeup of the U.S. immigrant population may be shifting, with the number of illegal immigrants entering the country falling behind the number of those entering legally, according to an independent report released Thursday.

The swing, a possible result of the economic slump and a federal immigration crackdown, marks a reversal of a pattern begun in the 1990s, when the number of newly arrived illegal immigrants surpassed those arriving lawfully, according to the study by the Pew Hispanic Center, a Washington think tank.

"This is a population that had been growing rapidly and substantially for at least 15 years, and the growth has essentially come to a halt in 2008," said Jeffrey S. Passel, a senior demographer at the center who co-wrote the report.

Other recent studies have pointed to possible declines

in the number of illegal immigrants living in the U.S. But the Pew study is among the first to show a decrease in the number of illegal immigrants coming into the country.

The report estimates that 11.9 million illegal immigrants were living in the United States as of March, making up nearly 4% of the population.

From 2000 to 2004, about 800,000 illegal immigrants a year entered the U.S., more than 90% of them from Latin America. Since then, the average has dropped to about 500,000 a year. By contrast, legal immigration has remained steady at about 650,000 people a year.

The findings have spurred debate over the reason for the apparent shift. Likely causes include the U.S. economic slowdown and federal enforcement measures such as mass workplace raids, which have been criticized by immigrant advocates.

The economic downturn has had a disproportionate impact on foreign-born

Latinos, many of whom work in the housing and construction sectors. The enforcement crackdown came at a time when the economies of Mexico and other Latin American countries have been stable, experts said.

"The climate in the United States is not positive to these workers," said Frank D. Bean, director of the Center for Research on Immigration, Population and Public Policy at UC Irvine. "Whether that is the beginning of a new trend, or an ephemeral result of the labor market, is the question."

Still, the new data suggest that the rate of illegal immigration can vary according to conditions and policies, said Steve A. Camarota, research director at the Center for Immigration Studies, a Washington think tank that favors more controls on all forms of immigration.

"The idea is that illegal immigration is a fact of life, sort of like the weather," Camarota said. "What this suggests is something else, that if you change the incentives, whether it is through enforcement, the economy or some combination of the two, people respond."

Immigration has not been a major issue in the presidential campaign but is likely to confront a new administration and Congress as experts spar over

ways to address the issue following the collapse of congressional immigration reform efforts last year.

"People come to work, and they come because there is a job. They are not accidental tourists," said Angela Kelley, director of the Immigration Policy Center in Washington, who added that she believes the economy is the primary factor driving down numbers of illegal immigrants.

Camarota said increased law enforcement had also played a vital part.

"Even a small increase in enforcement can have a huge impact on behavior," Camarota said. "If you pull one person over for speeding, everybody slows down."

Another study released Thursday by Pew points to the disproportionate effect of the economic downturn on "noncitizen immigrant households." At the same time that the median annual income of all U.S. households increased, noncitizen immigrant households saw their incomes fall from about \$40,600 to about \$37,600 in 2007. Of those, nearly half were headed by an illegal immigrant.

Source: <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/oct/03/nation/na-immig3>

ICE Arrests Boat Operator On Alien Smuggling Charges



December 4, 2008

MIAMI - U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents arrested a Cuban boat operator for attempting to smuggle 15 migrants into the United States following an ICE-led investigation.

On December 2, 2008, Rafael Suarez-Sanchez, 38, a Cuban national, was arrested by ICE agents for alien smuggling. Suarez-Sanchez made his initial appearance in court yesterday afternoon. His bond was set at \$150,000 corporate surety. If convicted,

Suarez-Sanchez faces up to 10 years in prison for the alien smuggling charges.

On November 26, 2008, at approximately 5:03 p.m., U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Marine Interdiction agents (MIA) assigned to the Miami Marine Unit aboard a CBP vessel were on routine patrol and observed a vessel that appeared to be over-loaded with passengers approximately three nautical miles east of Government Cut in Miami. The vessel, a 2000 Mako, had approximately eight persons visible in the cockpit area, in addition to the operator. The CBP crew intercepted the vessel without incident. Upon boarding the vessel, the CBP officers identified Suarez-

Sanchez as the operator of the vessel.

On board the vessel were 14 undocumented Dominican nationals and one undocumented Guyanese national. None of the undocumented nationals had permission to enter the United States.

Additionally, six of the Dominican nationals on the vessel were previously deported from the United States and were arrested for violating Title 8, United States Code, Section 1326, for re-entry after having been removed from the United States. If convicted, the six Dominican nationals face up to 10 years in prison for attempting to

enter the US after having been previously deported.

United States Attorney R. Alexander Acosta commended the investigative efforts of ICE's Office of Investigations and the interdiction of the defendants by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection.

The case is being prosecuted by Special Assistant U.S. Attorney Russ Brown. Related court documents and information may be found on the website of the District Court for the Southern District of Florida at <http://www.flsd.uscourts.gov> or on <http://pacer.flsd.uscourts.gov>.

Source: <http://www.ice.gov/pi/nr/0812/081204miami.htm>

Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA)

What is ESTA and how does it affect your travels to the United States?

ESTA is an automated system used to determine the eligibility of visitors to travel to the United States under the **Visa Waiver Program (VWP)** and whether such travel poses any law enforcement or security risk.

ESTA will be a mandatory program effective January 12, 2009.

ESTA is not a visa, but a travel authorization. It does not meet the legal or regu-

latory requirements to serve in lieu of a U.S. visa when a visa is required under U.S. law. Individuals that possess a valid visa will still be able to travel to the United States on that visa for the purpose it was issued. Individuals traveling on valid visas will not be required to apply for an ESTA.

ESTA approval authorizes a traveler to board a carrier for travel to the United States under the VWP. In the same way that a valid visa does not constitute a determination of admissibility, an approved ESTA is

not a guarantee of admissibility to the United States.

Approved ESTA application will be valid for a period of two years, such that a visitor may travel to the U.S. repeatedly within a two-year period without having to apply for another ESTA. Travelers whose ESTA applications are approved, but whose passports will expire in less than two years, will receive an ESTA valid until the passport's expiration date.

ESTA will accommodate last minute and emergency

travelers, but every effort should be made to apply for ESTA at least 72 hours prior to departure.

In order to apply for an ESTA authorization, go to <https://esta.cbp.dhs.gov/> and follow the instructions to submit an application.

Every effort should be made to apply for ESTA at least 72 hours prior to departure.

US Embassy, Georgetown

100 Young & Duke Streets
Kingston
Georgetown
GuyanaA

Phone: 592-225-4900
Visa Inquiries Phone: 592-225-7965 or 592-225-7966
Consular Fax: 592-227-0221
Visa Inquiries E-mail: visageorge@state.gov

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Maritza Correia
Gold Medal Swimmer

Notable Person of Guyanese Heritage

Maritza Correia

Maritza ("Ritz") Correia was born on December 23, 1981 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. She is the first black Puerto Rican in the U.S. Olympic Swimming Team and the first Black American to set an American and World swimming record.

Correia's parents, Vincent and Anne, from Guyana, moved to San Juan, where Correia was born and raised.

In 1988, when Correia was seven years old, she was diagnosed with severe scoliosis. Her doctor recommended that Maritza take swimming classes and use swimming as a treatment for her condition. In 1990, her family moved and settled in Tampa, Florida.

Correia attended Tampa Bay Technical High School and joined the school's swimming team. In 1999, she became the U.S. National Champion in the 50m freestyle in the 18 and under category. She was also a six time Florida High School State Champion in the 5 different events. Correia was a member of the 1997 USA National Junior Team that competed in Sweden and of the 1999 USA Short Course World Championship Team which competed in Hong Kong.

In 1999, Correia joined the University of Georgia Lady Bulldogs Swimming and Diving Team. She aided the team when they won their title in the 400m freestyle relay. She earned a share of the SEC Commissioner's Trophy for high point honors. First and only swimmer in SEC history to win an SEC title in all Freestyle events. During her college career she was a 27-time All-American, and 11 Time NCAA Champion.

In 2001, Correia won a gold medal in the 800m freestyle and two bronze medals in the medley and 400m freestyle relay as a member of the U.S. Team at the 2001 World Championship celebrated in Japan.

In 2002, Correia became the national champion in both the 50y and 100y freestyle and was a member of two winning relay teams at the NCAA Championships celebrated in Austin, Texas. She set the NCAA, American and U.S. Open records with a time of 21.69 in the 50 y freestyle, surpassing Amy Van Dyken's mark of 21.77 set in 1994. She earned seven All-American certificates and she was awarded the Commissioner's Cup as the high point scorer in the SEC Championships.

In 2003, Correia earned a gold medal swimming on prelim 400 m free relay at the World Championships. In 2004, she won a gold medal swimming prelims at the 400 m free relay at the Short Course World Championships and earned an Olympic silver medal swimming prelims of the 400m free relay at the 2004 Olympic Games celebrated in Athens, Greece.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maritza_Correia